

Jeff Strack is the President and CEO of Indiana Grocery Group/Strack & Van Til. Last year, when the parent company Central Grocers filed for bankruptcy, Strack & Van Til was forced to shut down numerous stores. Jeff was not going to lose the family business that has been around for almost six decades. After he and a group of investors formed Indiana Grocery Group and put together a successful bid to buy back Strack & Van Til, Mr. Strack vowed to keep it a family-owned business. Today, under Jeff's leadership, the grocery chain has twenty locations in communities throughout Northwest Indiana. In addition, Mr. Strack is focused on providing good jobs and assisting charitable organizations throughout the region.

Terry McMahon is the owner and president of the successful accounting firm, McMahon and Associates, in Munster. Terry started his company in the 1970's with only himself and a part-time typist. Munster was a growing community at that time, and as the town developed, the company continued to grow. Today, McMahon and Associates consists of thirty employees and three partners, serving 600 businesses and handling approximately 1,300 personal income tax returns. Terry attributes his success to the development of positive relationships with clients and his outstanding employees. In addition, Mr. McMahon is known for his generosity and gives back to the community through various charitable endeavors.

In 1983, Scott Albanese, owner and CEO of the Albanese Confectionery Group, opened his first candy store in Merrillville. After years of hard work and dedication, in 2000, Scott opened his second location, which has become the successful and popular Albanese Candy Factory and Outlet Store in Hobart. Under Mr. Albanese's direction, the company manufactures its own products, operates internationally, and continues to grow.

The recipient of the Enterprise of the Year Award is Mono Sol, a division of Kuraray, a Japanese company that acquired the business in 2012. MonoSol produces a patented water-soluble film used in numerous products and markets. Operating since 1953, the company has grown exponentially since the TidePod was introduced by Proctor & Gamble in 2012. Under the direction of its CEO, P. Scott Bening, MonoSol has doubled its workforce since 2012 and is currently headquartered in Merrillville. MonoSol also maintains a plant in La Porte and two manufacturing facilities currently located in Portage. The company has diversified into other areas of its market including agricultural and packaging materials, as well as synthetic marble for stone products used in home construction. MonoSol has been a tremendous asset to the community of Northwest Indiana, and Mr. Bening is focused on growing the company in the region, a community of which he is very proud to be a part.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and my other distinguished colleagues to join me in commending these dedicated leaders and organizations upon their induction into the Northwest Indiana Business and Industry Hall of Fame. They are truly deserving of this honor, and for their exceptional leadership and commitment to the region and beyond, each of them is worthy of the highest praise.

TRIBUTE IN HONOR OF JOHN
DESIMONE

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 1, 2018

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my constituent, John DeSimone, for his exemplary Military service during the Korean war, and his steadfast commitment to his family and his community.

Born in New York City on June 3, 1931, John DeSimone lived in lower Manhattan until he moved to Astoria in 1969 with his wife, Mary Ellen Sapanaro DeSimone. They were married for 45 years until her passing in 2015. They share a daughter, Maria, who lives with her husband in a separate apartment of the same home.

On November 15, 1951, John DeSimone was drafted and entered the U.S. Army. He completed Army Basic Training at Camp Kilmer in New Jersey, now known as Fort Dix, and served in the Transportation Corps of the U.S. Army in the 13th Field Artillery Regiment, Ordnance Transportation Company.

Private First Class DeSimone served with honor and conducted assigned tasks above the call of duty in combat conditions. PFC DeSimone was decorated with the National Defense Service Medal, the United Nations Service Medal, and the Merit Unit Commendation. He was awarded three Bronze Stars with his Korean Service Medal for exceptionally meritorious service in support during the most hostile period of the Korean war. PFC DeSimone's outstanding performance, expertise, and unwavering commitment to mission accomplishment in a hostile environment were vital to successful combat operations. His contributions and dedication to duty are in keeping with the finest traditions of the armed forces and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army. He was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army on November 4, 1953 after serving 1 year, 11 months, and 20 days.

Prior to his service, John DeSimone had worked as a runner for the New York Stock Exchange and later returned to the NYSE following his honorable discharge. He worked as a runner for the NYSE for forty more years. After retiring, Mr. DeSimone continued to serve others as a school crossing guard for fifteen years and an Elder in Steinway Reformed Church, where he was involved with the Ministry as a devout Protestant. When he later developed Alzheimer's, Mr. DeSimone began attending day programs at Sunnyside Community Service and NYU Horticultural program, where he was actively involved.

Mr. Speaker, John DeSimone's service to his family, his community, and his country is an inspiration to all of us. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring my constituent, John DeSimone, and thank him for his service.

CELEBRATING THE SERVICE AND
DEDICATION OF KEVIN KREMER

HON. BILL HUIZENGA

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 1, 2018

Mr. HUIZENGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the service of Kevin Kremer, and his

tireless devotion to educating and training students. Throughout his 28 year career in education, Kevin has mentored and guided countless number of students both in and out of the classroom.

As a cross country and track & field coach, Kevin has inspired student athletes to reach their fullest potential while instilling in them a team-first attitude.

For 18 years Kevin coordinated trips to Washington, D.C. for Zeeland Public School students. With his careful attention to every detail involved in these trips, including reservations for hotels and airlines, loading metro passes, and scheduling activities in and around Washington, D.C., Kevin created opportunities and lifelong memories for students from all walks of life.

Mr. Speaker, Kevin Kremer dedicated his life to educating and inspiring the future leaders of this nation. It is thus fitting and proper that we celebrate and honor his service here today. I extend my deepest gratitude to Kevin for his years of selfless service, and I offer my congratulations on a job well done.

IN HONOR OF VICKIE JASMANN
FOR WINNING THE 2018 WYOMING
JEFFERSON AWARD

HON. LIZ CHENEY

OF WYOMING

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 1, 2018

Ms. CHENEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Vickie Jasmann on winning the 2018 Wyoming Jefferson Award. She deserves to be very proud of this prestigious recognition.

The Jefferson Award is the most revered award for public service in Wyoming. It was created with the goal of honoring individuals who enrich the communities and may otherwise go unnoticed. The award emphasizes the importance of serving local communities and that one person can indeed make a difference. In Wyoming, a panel of five judges independently score nominated individuals and determine four finalists, including one winner.

Vickie Jasmann is a true inspiration to all who know her. She is a force for good in the Casper, Wyoming community. Her service started at a young age and only grew from there. When she was growing up, her family installed a phone line in their house for the American Cancer Society because there was no office in town. Her mother also helped start the local Relay for Life chapter. She has continued her work for the two organizations, motivated by her own battle with cancer and others she has lost along the way.

Vickie also works with the American Legion Auxiliary to support her fellow veterans and serves as a foster parent. She has fostered also 200 children over 10 years, including one that she adopted.

Vickie volunteers wherever she is needed, whether it be for organizations, festivals, or members of the community in need. She participates in theater productions at the Senior Center, served as a greeter at the Help the Homeless project, and was a Certified Tourist Ambassador during the Eclipse Festival. She also helps elderly members of the community with errands and picks up single mothers' children when needed.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Vickie Jasmann for winning the 2018 Wyoming Jefferson Award and thank her for her countless contributions to her community. She deserves to be extremely proud of all her hard work and of this award.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY
OF FIRST LADY BARBARA
PIERCE BUSH

SPEECH OF

HON. MARC A. VEASEY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 25, 2018

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of First Lady Barbara Pierce Bush.

As our nation mourns the loss of a true patriot, an advocate for families, a treasured First Lady, a dedicated wife, mother and grandmother, we also take the time to remember the legacy Barbara Bush left behind.

Barbara Bush was born in New York City in 1925 to Pauline and Marvin Pierce.

She went on to marry her beloved husband, George H.W. Bush in 1945. The two recently celebrated their 73rd wedding anniversary early this year. Mrs. Bush devotedly stood by her husband's side though his military service and later supported him as he entered public service and ascended the presidency.

As First Lady, moved to action by her own experience as a mother to a child with dyslexia, she used her influence to highlight the importance of family literacy. She championed this cause across our nation, helping to raise over \$110 million to support family literacy programs through the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy.

Dedicated to her mission to end the generational cycle of illiteracy, she advocated for the passage of the National Literacy Act of 1991, which established the National Institute for Literacy and allowed libraries to serve as educational literacy center for adults.

Among her big achievements was to set an example of humility and hard work for her family.

In her own words, Mrs. Bush wrote, "I want to be known as a wife, a mother, a grandmother . . . that's what I am. And I'd like to be known as someone who really cared about people . . ."

Our nation grieves with President George H.W. Bush and the entire Bush family. Our hearts are heavy, but we are grateful that we were privileged enough to bear witness to her message of grace, civility, and patriotism. She was a true gift to our nation.

I honor the incredible life and legacy of First Lady Barbara Bush.

H. RES. 861

HON. BRAD SHERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 1, 2018

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have co-sponsored H. Res. 861, urging the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of North Korea. This does not mean that I would

necessarily oppose an accord with North Korea that only partially achieves our objectives.

THE LONG ARM OF INJUSTICE:
DID A U.N. COMMISSION FOUND-
ED TO FIGHT CORRUPTION HELP
THE KREMLIN DESTROY A RUS-
SIAN FAMILY?

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 1, 2018

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, on Friday, April 27 I chaired a hearing at the Helsinki Commission inquiring into whether a U.N. Commission founded to fight corruption worked with the Kremlin to destroy a Russian family. The Russian government regularly pursues its vendettas beyond its borders, harassing and even murdering Russian emigres abroad—people who are on the Putin circle's target list for various reasons. The poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in England is one of the most recent examples to reach the news.

The family in question is the Bitkovs, and the Kremlin's sadistic pursuit of them is in its way just as shocking as its cruel murder of Litvinenko and the attempted murders of the Skripals. The Bitkovs are still alive today, but they have been hounded for over a decade, to the opposite end of the world, and beyond the limits of human endurance—merely for resisting Putin favorites who sought to take over their successful paper manufacturing company.

More shocking, the facts of the case strongly indicate—and we will hear testimony on this today—that the United Nations' International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, or CICIG, became deeply involved in the Kremlin's persecution of the Bitkov family. Indeed that CICIG acted as the Kremlin's operational agent in brutalizing and tormenting the Bitkov family.

Congress has a special responsibility in this matter because the United States is one of the largest contributors to CICIG's budget. There has been little congressional oversight of CICIG—it's clearly time for that to change.

In the 1990s Igor and Irina Bitkov built the Northwest Timber Company, acquiring and modernizing old factories to increase paper production. As their company grew, the Bitkovs took loans from several Russian state banks to finance further modernization. Their business prospered—grew to a value of hundreds of millions of dollars—and the family was approached by a powerful bank executive who sought to buy a majority share in the company at a significantly below-market rate. Other officials asked Irina to become politically involved in the President Vladimir Putin's party.

When the Bitkovs refused things got very ugly. Their 16-year-old daughter, Anastasia, was kidnapped for several days, drugged, and repeatedly raped. Her parents ransomed her—paying the money to policemen, who said they were go-betweens to the kidnappers. Then the banks suddenly called in the loans, even though the Bitkovs had excellent credit. The family was threatened with imprisonment and death.

Fearing for their lives, the family fled Russia. They found what they thought was legal refuge in Guatemala with the help of a Guatemalan law firm. They acquired Guatemalan passports, bought a house, learned Spanish, and gave birth to their second child, Vladimir.

But the Kremlin caught up to them and VTB Bank, one of Russia's biggest state-controlled banks, often referred to as "Putin's Piggy Bank," filed a complaint against them in Guatemala, alleging use of false identification documents.

While we don't know exactly what transpired internally to CICIG and the Guatemalan state agencies that work with them, it appears to have been taken up by the Guatemalan state and CICIG. In any case, the Bitkovs suddenly found themselves catapulted into what has become for them a horror without end.

On January 15, 2015, Igor, Irina, Anastasia and Vladimir were awoken by an armed raid on their home—70 or so armed policemen woke them up, took them away, and spent 20 hours tearing apart their home and their office.

It got much worse—the Bitkovs were put into cages for nine days. Their daughter—remember she had been kidnapped and repeatedly raped years earlier—was denied medication, now suffered a nervous breakdown. As the ordeal continued, she would later make multiple suicide attempts. Their infant son was torn away from them, not even permitted to stay with friends, and sent to an orphanage, where he sustained facial injuries, a chipped tooth, conjunctivitis, lost the ability to speak. When family friends recovered him they found that, when given food, little Vladimir immediately began hiding it under his shirt. I will not say more now about the Bitkovs harrowing ordeal—their lawyers will speak to that. Suffice it to say that Igor, Irina, and Anastasia have remained incarcerated since January 2015.

In January of this year, despite an earlier appeals court ruling that the Bitkovs' alleged offense was only administrative in nature and punishable with a fine, Igor was sentenced to 19 years in prison and Irina and Anastasia were sentenced to 14 years each. These sentences were far harsher than those given to Guatemalan officials who perpetrated the sale of passports—they are harsher than sentences given to rapists or murderers.

What was CICIG's role in all of this? What we know for a fact is this: CICIG and a special branch of the attorney general's office worked together on the investigation and arrest of the Bitkovs—CICIG personnel participated in the raid on the Bitkovs home. Then CICIG and VTB Bank initiated and aggressively pursued the legal case against them, consistently arguing at every level of the judicial process against the Bitkovs, including against their appeal to be tried as migrants guilty of an administrative offense rather than a criminal one. CICIG—via its representative Claudia Gonzalez Orellana—defended the role of the VTB Bank in the prosecution of the Bitkovs. Oddly, CICIG never prosecuted the law firm which provided the Bitkovs with the passports that destroyed their lives.

As Bill Browder testified: "Inexplicably . . . In January 2015, a criminal case against the Bitkovs was opened at the direction of CICIG. Immediately after, 70 armed police officers raided the Bitkov's home, arrested Irina, Igor, and Anastasia and detained them in cages behind the parking garage in the main court building of Guatemala City."